Navy, Negroes in—1936

Greenwood Journal
January 28, 1936

Openings for Negroes

Eleven young negroes from North and South Carolina are to be enlisted in the United States navy during the month of February for duty with the messman branch of the naval service. The duties of these men consist of general serving work in the officers' quarters with advancement later to officers' cooks and stewards. Only men of good character between 18 and 25 years of age are eligible for enlistment. They must be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic and must pass a rigid physical examination. Applications for enlistment are being received at the Navy Recruiting station, postoffice building, Greenwood, every week day from 9 a. m. to 4:30 p. m., excepting Saturdays when the hours are 9 a. m. to 1 p. m.

Anderson, S. C. Mail
February 24, 1936

NEGROES FOR NAVY

Twelve young negroes from North and South Carolina are to be enlisted in the United States navy during the month of March, for duty with the messman branch of the naval service. The duties of these men consist of general serving work in the officer's quarters with advancement later to officer's cooks and stewards. To be eligible for enlistment, these men must be between 18 and 25 years of age, of good character, must be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic and must pass a rigid physical examination. Applications for enlistment are being received at the navy recruiting station, postoffice building, Greenwood, every week day from 9:00 a. m. to 4:30 p. m., excepting Saturdays, when the hours are 9:00 a. m. to 1:00 p. m.

Middy

JAMES L. K. JOHNSON

James L. K. Johnson, a student at the Case School of Applied Science, in Cleveland, was admitted this week as a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, Representative Arthur W. Mitchell, his sponsor, said Wednesday, in Washington. He will enter the Academy June 15.

Because of his high scholastic record, Johnson was exempted from the mental test given candidates for the Naval Academy April 15. He has already been examined by some of the best physicians in the country, Mitchell said, and has been pronounced physically perfect.

Paul Phillips, another Mitchell appointee to the Naval Academy, took the mental examination April 15. Mitchell said that he felt certain that Phillips would pass his examination satisfactorily.

Greenwood, S. C. Index-Journal
April 29, 1936

Openings in Navy for Negroes

Eight young negroes from North and South Carolina are to be enlisted in the United States navy during the month of May, for duty with the messman branch of the naval service. The duties of these men consist of assisting with the preparation and serving of food for officers and of general attendants. To be eligible for enlistment in the rating of mess attendant, a negro must be between 18 and 25 years of age, of good character, be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic and must pass a rigid physical examination. Applications for enlistments are being received at the navy recruiting station, Postoffice building, Greenwood, every week day from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m., excepting Saturdays when the hours are 9 a. m. to 1 p. m.

NEGRO ADMITTED TO ANNAPOLIS

James L. Johnson, class A student at Case School of Applied Science, has been admitted to the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Johnson, who was appointed by Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell, is the first Negro to be admitted at the Acadamy for many decades.

Admit Negro Named By Mitchell To Naval Academy at Annapolis

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — James Lee Johnson, jr., 20, of Chicago, named to a cadetship at the United States Military Academy by Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell of Illinois, was sworn in as a midshipman here Monday. He is the first Negro to be admitted to the academy in the last sixty years.

Johnson was one of seven young men appointed last March by the congressman. He is the first of four from among which two were to be admitted to the naval academy. The other three are Paul Phillips Cook, George Edwin Burke and James D. Fowler, all of Chicago.

Of the three named to the military academy at West Point, one as principal and two others as alternates, none has as yet been admitted. These three, also of Chicago, are Edward L. Davenport Beverly Klein Cole and Charles Hambrick.

D. C. Youth Sworn in as Cadet at Naval Academy

JAMES LEE JOHNSON, 19-year-old graduate of the Dunbar High School, and a student in the Case School of Applied Science, Cleveland Ohio, was admitted to the Annapolis Naval Academy yesterday (Monday).

Nominated by Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell, Democrat, of Chicago, Ill., Johnson had such a high average in his college work that he was exempt from taking the entrance examinations. He passed the physical examination yesterday and was sworn in at 3:30 in the afternoon, as his former military instructor, Colonel Harry O. Atwood looked on.

The admission of Johnson was the first time, since 1879, that a Negro has been admitted to the Naval Academy.

At the Case School of Applied Science, Johnson has made an exceptionally fine record. He is a member of the fencing team, the Glider Club, the track team, and of the Gamma Phi Fraternity.

His parents, Mr. and Mrs. James L. Johnson, live at 1737 S Street, Northwest.

Negro Youth To Annapolis

Mitchell's Appointee Passes Physical Exam

ANNAPOLIS.--For the first time in more than 20 years, a Negro James Lee Johnson Jr., was admitted to the United States naval academy as a midshipman Monday, June 15.

Johnson is an appointee of Representative Arthur W. Mitchell of Illinois. He was admitted to the academy along with 44 white youths after he had passed the physical examination.

Greensboro, N. C., News
June 16, 1936

NEGRO IS ADMITTED TO NAVAL ACADEMY

Annapolis, Md., June 15.—(AP)—A negro was admitted to the naval academy as a midshipman today for the first time in more than 20 years.

James Lee Johnson, Jr., an appointee of Rep. Arthur W. Mitchell, Democrat, Illinois, successfully passed the physical examination and was among the 45 candidates admitted. He did his preparatory work at the Dunbar high school, Washington, D. C., and had previously passed his mental examination.

Concord, N. C. Tribune
June 16, 1936

Negro Youth Qualifies, Enters Naval Acedemy

Annapolis, Md., June 17.—Having qualified scholastically and passed the physical tests, James L. Johnson, Jr., a negro youth of Chicago appointed by Representative Arthur Mitchell of the First Illinois Congressional District, has been admitted to the Naval Academy.

He is the first member of his race to become a midshipman since just after the Civil War, and none has ever been graduated from the Naval Academy.

Midshipman ohnson, assigned to quarters in Cancroft Hall, was one of forty-five midshipmen admitted during the day, bringing the membership of the new fourth class to 175. He formerly attended Dunbar high school, Washington, D. C.

James R. Portwig Gives Interview After Twenty Years In U. S. Navy

Well Known Officers' Steward Gets Transfer After More Than Two Decades At Sea—Home In Los Angeles.

Reprinted from May issue of Naval Affairs, official organ of the Fleet Reserve Association.

James Rufus Portwig, an officer's steward, first class, completed twenty years active service in the United States Navy early in April. He decided to leave the restrictions of military discipline and the routine of shipboard and anchor in the harbor of civilian citizenship. Ten more years on naval payrolls must be passed before gaining the benefits of retirement and Steward Portwig made up his mind to shift his naval berth to the Fleet Naval Reserve.

As the day of transfer approached, this son of Neptune was so touched with his thoughts of leaving a happy ship manned by true shipmates that he was moved to record his emotions in a letter of farewell.

"Officers and shipmates," he wrote, "on the 7th of April, I will be saying goodbye to a life that has been so dear to me these last 20 years.

"There are some events and emotions that can never become quite commonplace. The reddening of the autumn leaves and the green tide of oncoming springtime in the natural world are perpetual miracles, and that is why, as the years roll on, these particular goodbyes do not become stereotyped.

"I appreciate the association of the men on one of the best ships in the Navy, the U. S. S. Saratoga, the Ship of Happy Landings. If, during my administration as your steward, the Officers' Wardroom Mess has been as big a success as any other mess, my efforts have not been in vain. If it has advanced and its service has been greater to its membership, it has been due to you officers. Your trust, your support have brought me to a point from which I can look back on the long way that has been traveled, and look forward to the still longer way that is to be trodden by your feet, and the feet of your successors, and my heart is full of joy, full of gratitude, that I have been permitted to serve such a company of relays of wonderful men. Men who are thinking of what they can put into life, instead of what they can take from it, men who have formed a conception of public conscience and a code of public honor, which leads them to think of what they can do for their country can do for them.

"You have demonstrated that you have the true gift of public spirit which destroys self-interest as a dominant motive. You have shown loyalty and justice to the crew, regardless for race, color or cred. Whenever I received praise for a good meal, it was always a help and an incentive to new and better endeavor.

"The encouraging remark from the different officers and shipmates shall remain as something very dear in memory, and not only as something dear, but also as something with a vital quality of its own to increase my strength for new labors.

"I wish all hands a pleasant cruise. I shall miss the one, two and three o'clock calls for the quartermaster during flight operations and the familiar faces of the famous old Sixteenth Division and perhaps long to be back with you, but let me say that in the mind of memory, I shall draw recollections of friendships that time cannot tarnish and which I hope time will ever make brighter."

This letter may not find acclaim as a literary gem, but it does deserve recognition as a clear expression of sincere appreciation by a real man.

There are thousands of men who serve actively in the Navy for the best twenty years of life and then pass into the Fleet Naval Reserve, but it is unusual to get self-recorded reactions from one of them. There may be some who are happy over reaching the point where they pass into the "outside," but there are very few who do not share emotions similar to those expressed by Steward James Portwig. Twenty years in the Navy will make a man of any recruit, and what is more, it will produce as fine a type of citizen as may be found beneath the Stars and Stripes of America. One can't read Shipmate Portwig's letter and envisage anything but a clean cut citizen, ready to carry into civilian channels the high loyalty and unselfish devotion to duty that marks the lives of the regular service veterans of the United States Navy.

The Congress of the United States will make a mistake if it ever permanently withdraws the benefits and privileges which encourage the healthy young Americans to follow the Navy as a career—both the National Defense and America's Citizenry will lose strength if that happens.

America needs its Portwigs.

On Recruit Leave

JAMES W. KEY, JR.

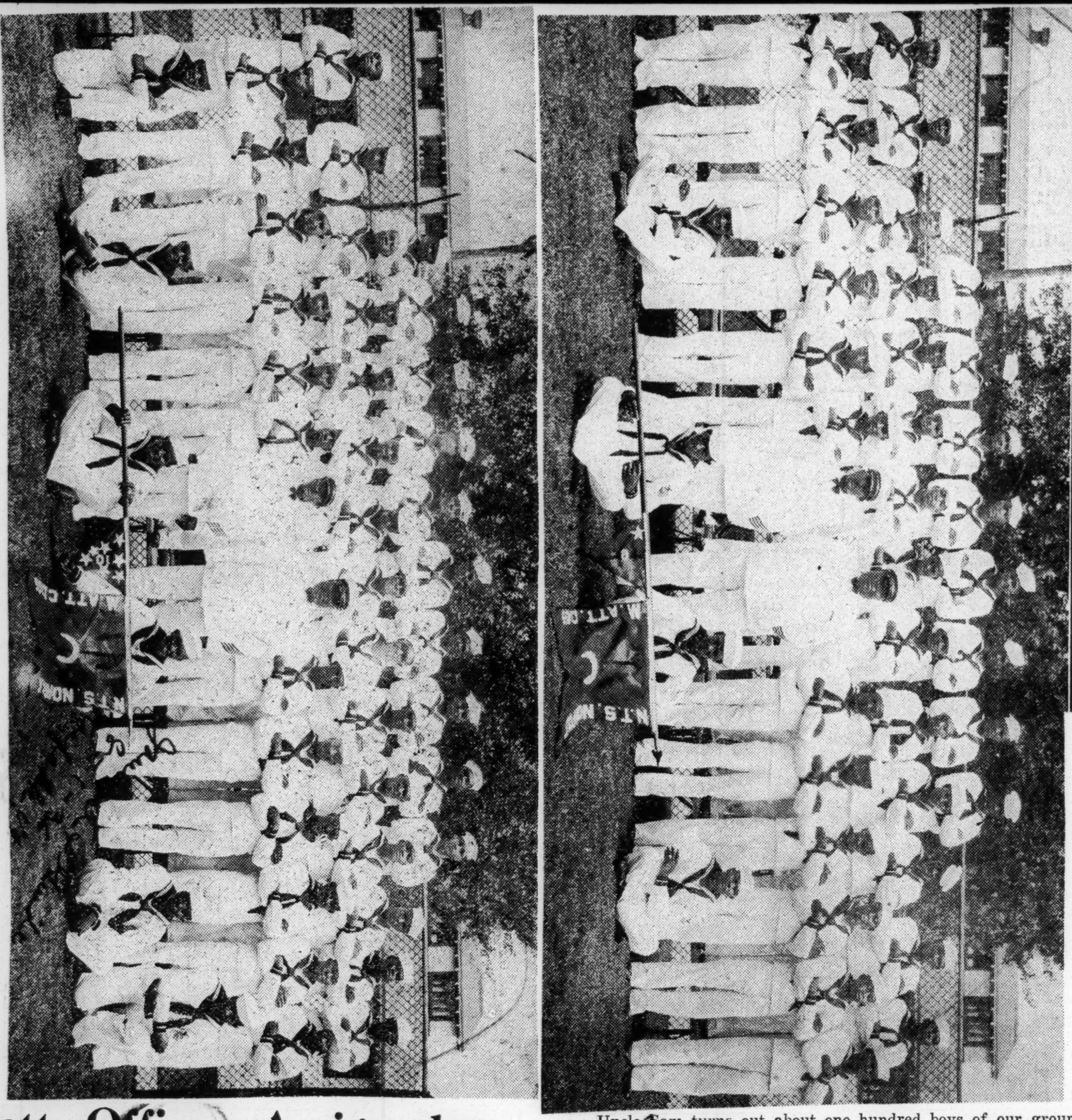
Sailor son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Key, Sr., 907 1-2 N. Compton ave., who is visiting his parents on recruit leave this week. Monday he will depart for San Diego, where he will board a U.S.A. Pacific fleet battle ship to begin four years' service.

Key who was a Vashon student and a grocery clerk joined the Navy here in 1936. At the training station in Norfolk, Va., he attained the distinction of being selected for Apprentice Petty Officer first class.

Key is 21 years old. At Vashon he was captain of the gym team.

Navy, Negroes in — 1936

Young Gobs Ready for Sea Duty



Uncle Sam turns out about one hundred boys of our group each month at the Naval Training Station at Norfolk, after putting them through a three-month course of training as messmen. At present enlistments are restricted to this class, but it is understood unofficially that in the near future colored youths will be enlisted for training in other naval capacities. Six colored stewards serve as instructors of the boys, in addition to naval officers. The two classes shown above have excelled in their branch of training, class ten (at the right) receiving eight stars, in competition with four other classes, the highest number ever to be awarded to a group of colored recruits. These two classes were instructed by Stewards May and Patterson, seen standing in the front center of the groups. These boys will have "breaking out" exercises at ten o'clock Friday morning.

3 Petty Officers Assigned to Annapolis Navy Posts

Ousting of Filipinos Means Jobs for 233 Mess Attendants.

Photo on Picture Page

Three chief petty officers have been recalled to Annapolis Naval Academy and assigned to the U.S.S. Cumberland as instructors of mess attendants.

They are Norman Parker, transferred from New London, Conn., Naval Station; Frank McKinney of San Diego, Cal., and Arthur Strivers.

The latter, who was chief commissary steward at Honolulu, is back in the United States for his first time in 18 years.

Officer Strivers, an AFRO visitor last week with Mrs. Strivers, and their daughter, Irene, said that their job is to give 193 men instructions in table etiquette, personal hygiene and general conduct. Some 40 additional mess attendants will join the school when the Steamer Oklahoma returns from Spain.

Increased opportunities for colored men in the navy are available since the navy order barring Filipinos as mess attendants.

Mrs. Strivers said their daughters, Irene, 14, and Arthurline, aged 6, have gotten their first experience with jim crow this month, as none exists in Hawaii. Asked about Japanese then, she said.

"They are the finest neighbors, take anything off you and do not expect you to take anything off them.

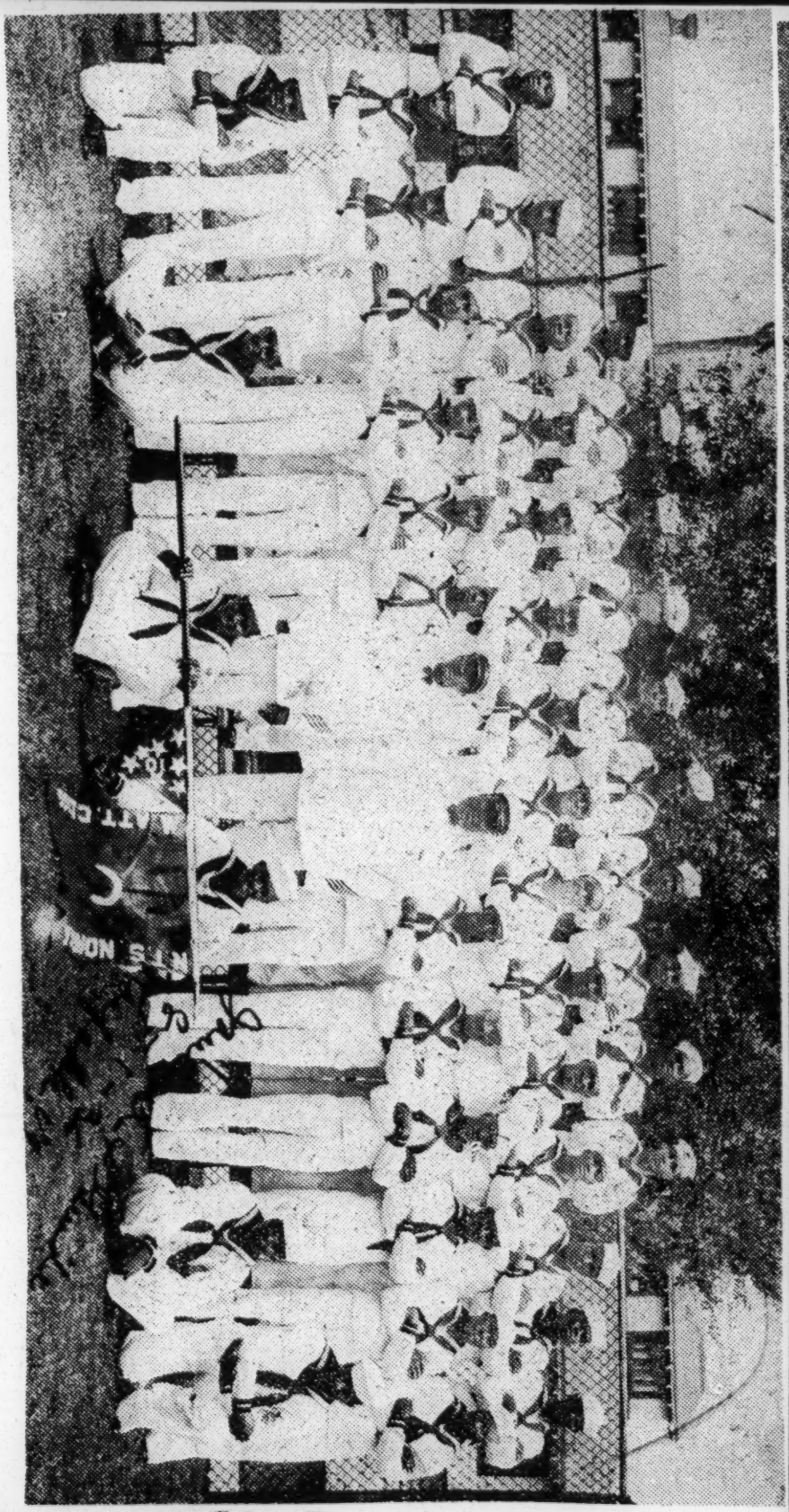
"We were sorry to leave Honolulu and will be glad to get back. My husband has only a year and a half before he is eligible for retirement."

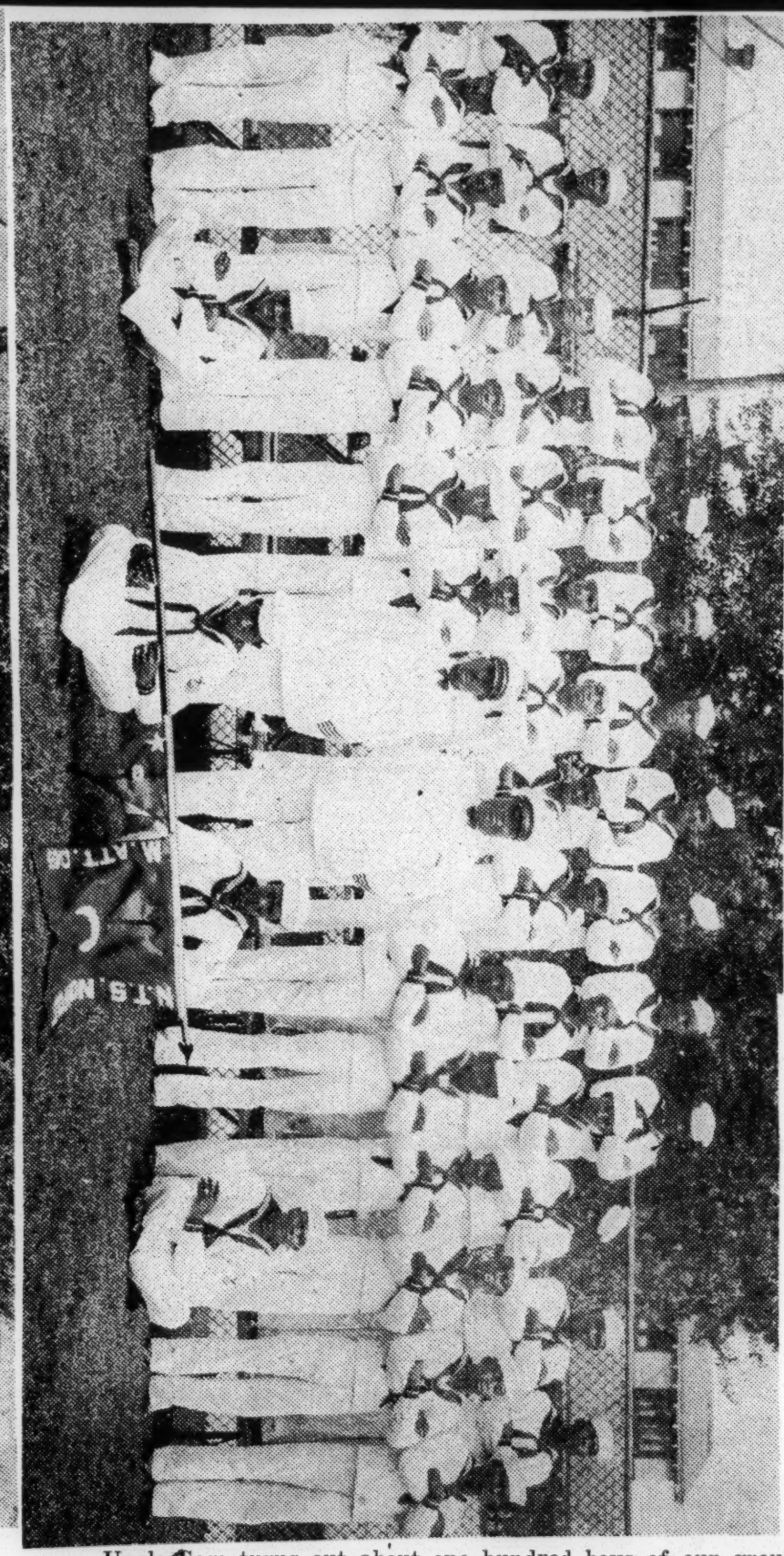
Officer Strivers joined the navy as a mess attendant, served as fireman and then as third class cook before his promotion to chief commissary steward.

Mrs. Strivers told the AFRO that able colored persons are eligible for real jobs in Hawaii. Nolle R. Smith, a construction engineer, draws $468 a month in a United States bureau. M. Walker is telephone inspector at $10 per day, and Earl Rosenburgh is a pilot licensed to operate ocean steamers.

Navy, Negroes in — 1936

Young Gobs Ready for Sea Duty





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MAKE APPLICATIONS FOR U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY TO CONG. HENNINGS

About 35 boys have already given their names to Congressman Thomas C. Hennings, Jr., to compete for the 1937 vacancy for the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland. All of the candidates will compete in a Civil Service examination on Saturday, October 17th., the results of which will go far in determining the selection of a principal nominee and three alternates.

Any young man residing in the Eleventh Congressional District, embracing the central part of St. Louis, who will not be over the age of 20 by next July, is eligible to compete for the vacancy. Those who would like to take the examination should get in touch with Congressman Hennings or John Scott at his office, by September 28th. If a candidate is out of the city at the time, arrangements can be made for him to take the same examination at some convenient locality.

The examination includes algebra, plane geometry, English composition and literature, United States History, Ancient History, English grammar and physics, and is given by the Civil Service Commission to aid Senators and Congressmen in selecting appointees from numerous applicants. There is no cost for taking the examination.

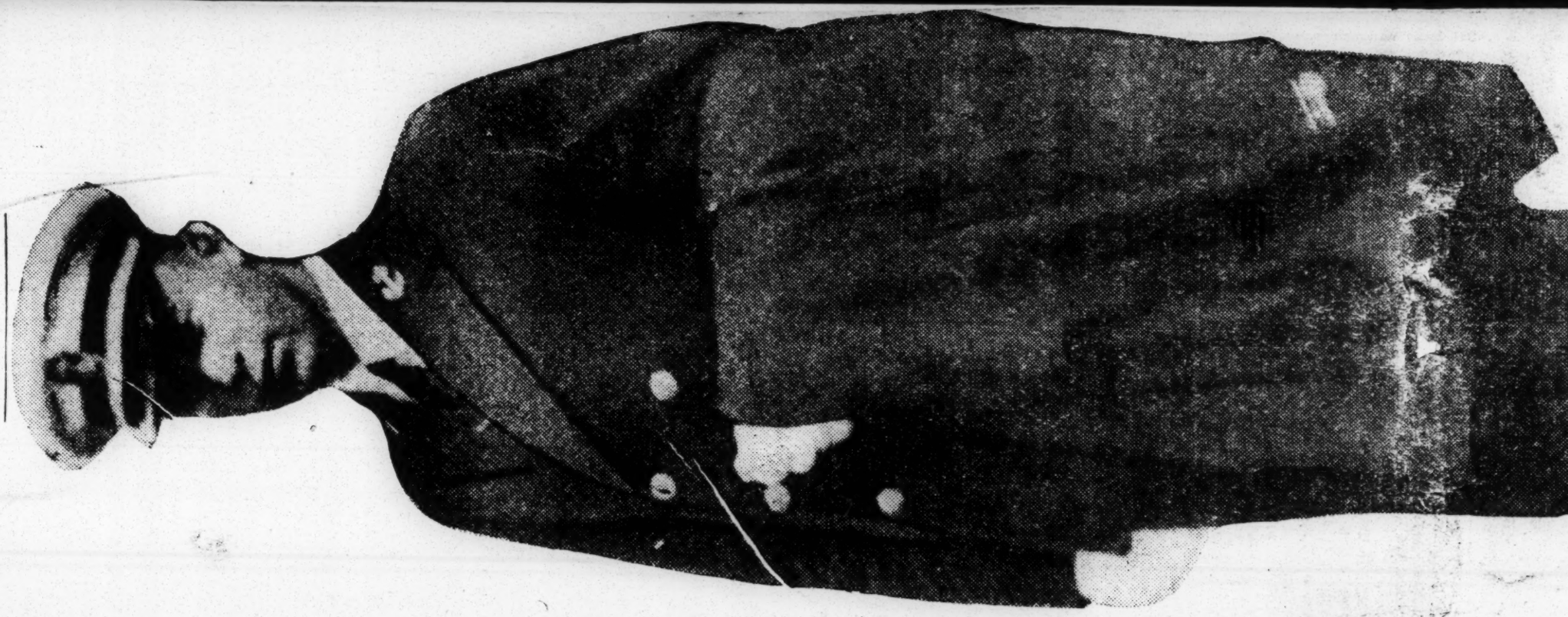
Nov 7, Register — 1936

Navy, Negroes in - 1936

THEY ALL LOOK THE SAME—Second company of midshipmen from the U.S. Naval Academy as they marched to the Baltimore Stadium last Saturday. Arrow points to James Lee Johnson, member of the company, who is a native of Washington, D.C. Young Johnson was appointed to the academy by Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell.

WAS ONE OF THE 2500—James Lee Johnson, midshipman at the United States Naval Academy, who took part in maneuvers at the Baltimore Stadium during the Yale-Navy game last Saturday. His team lost.

Cadet Rep. Mitchell Appointed to Navy



MIDSHIPMAN JAMES LEE JOHNSON. Photographed for first time by the AFRO as he marched with his regiment in Baltimore to the Navy-Yale game Saturday.

—Photo by Paul Henderson

(Exclusive to the AFRO)

BALTIMORE—Two white students were penalized for attempting to embarrass Midshipman James Lee Johnson, 19, according to reports.

The regiment from the United States Naval Academy arrived here by train Saturday for the Navy-Yale football game but the incident could not be verified.

Efforts to reach Midshipman Johnson and officials of the school were prevented by staff officers after learning the identity of the inquirers.

A midshipman, identified as a company captain, refused to let an AFRO reporter and a photographer approach the unit of which Johnson is a member.

About five weeks after Johnson was admitted to the academy, says the report, fellow students went into his room and disarranged the bed, books, and instruments. The usual inspection by a senior officer followed, and Johnson was called on the carpet for his failure to obey the regulations requiring him to keep his room in perfect order.

The trick was exposed when a senior midshipman in charge of rooms on the floor reported that Johnson's room was in perfect condition a few minutes before he left it. The senior's report resulted in an investigation, the AFRO learned.

The white students were cited before the superintendent of the institution, and denied all privileges for three months. The two, whose names could not be ascertained, may not leave the grounds of the school or attend any of the affairs or movies given at the academy, and were not with their companies when the regiment came to Baltimore for the game, it was learned.

Local football enthusiasts got a glimpse of the six-foot midshipman when he marched into the stadium shortly before the game. A member of Company 2, the youth who, because of his color is hard to distinguish from other members of the unit, is No. 3 man in the fourth squad of the company's second platoon.

Photos Made During March

While the regiment was standing at rest in the stadium, an AFRO photographer took several pictures of him from a distance. When white midshipmen in the squad realized that photographs were being taken, they turned their backs.

Johnson, who had been unaware of the photographer's acts, also turned his back.

The regiment arrived at Clifton Station at 12:20 p.m. and shortly after a rest period marched the mile and a half to the stadium at the pace of 120 steps a minute. Johnson sat in Section XA, Row J, Seat 18. At the opening of the game he remained in his seat.

Cheers for Team

During the second period, when the Navy team penetrated deep into Yale territory and finally scored, the midshipman showed marked enthusiasm. He waved his white-crowned cap when the Navy team scored the extra point, which placed the Tars in the lead by one point.

During the remainder of the game, he yelled the various Navy cheers and sang the score of songs, including "Anchors Aweigh." Every effort to approach him during and after the game was halted by student officials, one of whom stated that Midshipman Johnson could not be annoyed; must be respected the same as other midshipmen at the academy, and could not be interviewed.

Johnson, a resident of Washington, was appointed to the Naval Academy by Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell of Illinois. He entered the government institution on June 17. He is the son of James L. Johnson, a railway mail clerk, and Mrs. Gertrude Johnson, a gift shop operator.

Graduate of Dunbar

He was graduated from Dunbar High School as an honor student in 1933, and was a junior at the Case School of Applied Science in Cleveland when appointed to the academy. At the Ohio school, he was a member of the fencing team, the Gamma Phi honor fraternity and the glider team.

At the academy, he has taken up fourth-class fencing and may seek to make the class team. It was revealed that the youth, who weighs 185 pounds, may seek a berth on one of the academy's football teams next year.

Seen in the line of march were two Filipinos, who are darker than Johnson by several shades. On Saturdays (the day granted all midshipmen for leave at Annapolis) Johnson accompanies his roommate and other midshipmen to the various white restaurants, it was learned.